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GENERAL NOTES.

Members and friends of the Society are invited to aid the Committee on Publication in carrying out the work of this department. Communications of general interest will be gladly received, and may be sent to SIDNEY D. TOWNLEY, 2023 Bancroft Way, Berkeley California.

A meteor of unusual size and brilliancy fell on the evening of Monday, April 16th, at about 7 P. M., and was seen from Mt. Hamilton as far north as Ashland, Oregon. Unfortunately none of the astronomers at the Lick Observatory witnessed the phenomenon, but one of the ladies who chanced to be standing near a window facing to the north saw it, and described it as a fire-ball many times brighter than *Venus*. It was first seen a little north of the zenith and east of the meridian, and moved slowly northward, disappearing when about 20° from the horizon. Before it disappeared, it separated into two parts, one of which burst a second later with the appearance of a falling rocket. No explosion was heard, and no smoke-cloud was seen.

Newspaper reports show that the meteor was seen throughout the central and northern part of the State. At Chico its course was described as northward and downward. After traversing an arc of 45° it burst, and one large red ball of fire seemed to fly off at an angle from the original course. A small cloud of dense white smoke was visible for nearly half an hour.—*Chico Record*.

The Placer County *Leader* says: "A single ray shot upward at 45° to the west and a ball of fire shot downward at a right angle to it."

At Redding it was seen coming from the high northeastern sky, and passing toward the northwest, leaving a great trail of light and two small clouds of unusual brightness.

From Dunsmuir it was observed to flash out from the northeastern sky and pass toward the southwest. When it exploded, a report like the crack of a rifle was heard. An instant later there was a second explosion, fainter than the first, which completely shattered the meteor. The smoke-clouds were visible for some time afterward.

A letter received at the Lick Observatory from Mr. H. L. WHITED, at Ashland, Oregon, gives the following description:—"It appeared at exactly 7:05 P. M., April 16th, about S. S. E., at an altitude of about 30° , was visible about one second, apparently moving westerly and falling at an angle of 45° . To me it first appeared emerging from a cloud of white smoke with a short

trail falling, say 10° , then becoming invisible. We heard no explosion. The cloud of smoke remained in sight till dark, and was in diameter about five or six times as large as the moon."

Three star-catalogues that will be of great value to astronomers generally, and particularly to those engaged in micrometric work, have recently been issued.

The first of these is, in substance, the A. G. Catalogue for the zone $+35^\circ$ to $+40^\circ$ Declination, based on observations made at Lund, by N. C. DUNÉR and FOLKE ENGSTRÖM. The catalogue gives the separate observations of each star in the order of Right Ascension for the mean equinox of 1875.0.

The second is the Madras General Catalogue, prepared by C. MICHIE SMITH, the present Director of the Madras and Kodai-kanal Observatories, and based on the observations made with the Madras meridian-circle between the years 1862 and 1887, under the direction of the late Government Astronomer, N. R. POGSON. This catalogue gives the positions for 1875.0 of 5,303 stars, including all the brighter stars to the fifth magnitude, inclusive, that could be observed at Madras, and many fainter zodiacal stars and stars south of -30° Declination.

The third is the Cape Catalogue for 1890.0, based on the meridian observations in the years 1885 to 1895 made at the Cape of Good Hope under the direction of H. M. Astronomer, DAVID GILL.

The working list for this catalogue included, besides several special lists of stars used in the latitude and longitude work of the Geodetic Survey, and as comparison-stars for heliometer work, etc., all the stars of fourth magnitude or brighter which could be conveniently observed from the Cape, and all stars additional to those likely to be required for future use in any of the National Ephemerides, and twenty-four southern circumpolar stars.

In addition to these general catalogues, the annual catalogue of the Greenwich meridian-circle observations for the year 1897 has just been distributed.

In No. 73 of these *Publications*, brief mention was made of a new elementary astronomy by Dr. E. S. HOLDEN, lately published by HENRY HOLT & Co. It may not be inappropriate, however, to give a little further attention to a book from which

many young people are likely to receive their first formal notions of the science of astronomy. When called upon to select a text-book for class use the experienced teacher considers the method in which the subject is presented more carefully than the actual facts contained in the book. The latter will be substantially the same for any science in all the better books of about the same date.

We may therefore dismiss the descriptive parts of the book — Parts II and III — with the notice already referred to and the additional statement that while these portions of the work are considerably compressed, the best results of modern research find a place, so far as they are appropriate to an elementary text.

The method in which the author has aimed to present the fundamental concepts of astronomy may be stated most simply by a quotation or two from his Introduction. He says:—

“The study of astronomy should lead the student to comprehensive ideas of the universe at large. . . . It should be the aim of the text-book and of the teacher to so marshal the most significant of the results of observation that the student may acquire such wide and general views. If he at the same time gains a luminous idea of the most important of the methods by which such results are reached, his teaching has been successful.”

“The book is addressed especially to pupils who are studying astronomy for the first time. The chief difficulties of such students are not due to the intrinsic complexity of the separate problems that they meet, but rather to their apparent want of connection one with another, and above all to the unfamiliarity of the student with the methods of reasoning employed. It is therefore necessary to treat each new topic with great clearness, and not to dismiss it until its relation to other topics has been at least partially apprehended. The important point is to present the subject in a way to convince and to enlighten the pupil, and this object can only be attained in a text-book by some repetitions and by avoiding undue brevity.”

A careful reading of the 268 pages that constitute the first part of the book will convince any one that Dr. HOLDEN has carried out his method with success, and that any student who has studied the work as it is intended to be studied, thinking out for himself answers to the suggestive questions which accompany each chapter, and making the simple observations as directed, will possess clear notions of the fundamental principles of astronomy.

There is an occasional minor blemish in the way of typographical errors. In general these are of no importance, but some pupils may be misled by the statement of the second law of diurnal motion of the stars (page 49): “The greater the star’s north-

polar distance, the larger is the [diurnal] circle." This, of course, is true for all stars in the northern hemisphere; but from the context the pupil is likely to gather that it is true of the southern stars as well. We also notice that the author seems to prefer the French and English use of the north-polar distance as one of the co-ordinates of a star to the German and American practice of using the declination. But these are points of comparatively little consequence. In all essentials the book is one to be commended to teachers and pupils, as an excellent introduction in matter and method to the study of astronomy.

Telegrams received at the Lick Observatory and the Associated Press dispatches indicate that the total eclipse of the Sun was observed last Monday, May 28th, under unusually favorable conditions. The success of the Lick Observatory Expedition is noted elsewhere in this number. Mr. BURCKHALTER's programme* was carried out with complete success. His photographs will be looked for with special interest, as they should demonstrate conclusively the effectiveness of his method of controlling the relative lengths of exposure times for different portions of the corona.

A note on Miss O'HALLORAN's plans for observing the eclipse, both visually and photographically, from a station in Mexico, was accidentally omitted from the April number of these *Publications*.

We are sorry to learn that severe illness prevented Miss O'HALLORAN from carrying out her plans; but in spite of her illness, she viewed the eclipse through a pair of opera-glasses, and sends the following account of her observations:—

NEW ORLEANS, May 28, 1900.

The total eclipse of the Sun was observed here by me in an area of the sky that became entirely free from clouds only about fifteen minutes before second contact. It was then clear and blue. The inner corona became visible to the naked eye nearly one minute before totality, but it seemed shallow and inconspicuous even in the full gloom of eclipse, which resembled early twilight. The outer corona recalled that of January, 1889. The western wing, which extended about one degree from the Moon's limb, widened outwardly. The upper edge pointed almost directly to the planet *Mercury*. The entire outline was sharp and seemed of a streaky structure throughout. The eastern wing was not so distinct except at the base, and it tapered outwardly to invisibility before extending fully a

* See these *Publications* (No. 73, p. 64) for the details of the programme.

degree. The south polar rays were curved, pointed, and conspicuous. The fleecy white clouds seen half an hour after sunset convey an idea of the general tint of the corona.

Several other members of our Society were observers of this eclipse, among them Mr. COLTON, formerly of the Lick Observatory, who was in charge of the 40-foot photographic telescope of one of the parties sent out by the Naval Observatory.

In a subsequent number we hope to give some account of the scientific results obtained by the various observers.

Dr. WILLIAM LUTHER has been appointed Director of the Observatory at Düsseldorf to succeed his father, the late Robert Luther.

Director JAMES E. KEELER, of the Lick Observatory, has been elected a member of National Academy of Science.

At a recent meeting of the Board of Regents of the University of California, Professor ARMIN O. LEUSCHNER was made head of the Berkeley Astronomical Department. It was formerly a part of the department of Civil Engineering.

Professor GEORGE W. MYERS, Director of the Observatory of the University of Illinois, has resigned his position to take charge of the department of mathematics and astronomy in the Chicago Institute.

Dr. HENRY S. PRITCHETT has resigned his position of Superintendent of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey to accept the position of President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

PIAZZI SYMTH, a well-known astronomer and spectroscopist, for some time Astronomer Royal of Scotland, died on February 21st. He was born in Naples, and was named after the famous discoverer of *Ceres*.

The meetings of the Board of Directors, and of the Society, on June 9, 1900, were adjourned without the transaction of any business, owing to the lack of a quorum of members.